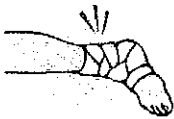


Strong Muscles

By Sharon Fabian



- Like all of the body's systems, the muscular system needs proper care and attention to stay in good shape. Muscles that are in good shape will be both strong and healthy. Luckily, it's not hard to remember what you need to do to maintain healthy muscles because what is good for the rest of the body is good for the muscles too.
- Muscles are bundles of cells called muscle fibers, and like all cells, muscle cells need energy to do their job. Their energy comes from the food you eat. Some people say that for lots of energy you need special food, like extra amounts of carbohydrates, energy bars, or special sports drinks. While some adult athletes do eat a special diet, this is not necessary for younger people. A well-balanced diet will provide all of the energy that your muscles need. The food pyramid that you probably learned about in health class explains it all. Just eat the right amount of servings from each food group and you will have the nutrition you need for strong muscles. If you do a lot of exercise, or play sports, you will also need plenty of liquid in your diet. Water is the best kind. Drinks like milk and juice are good sources of liquid too, and also provide additional nutrients.
- What else do your muscles need besides good nutrition? They need exercise. Exercise is good for all three types of muscles. Aerobic exercise is especially good for your heart, also called the cardiac muscle, because it brings in more oxygen. Aerobic exercise makes your heart muscle stronger. Aerobic exercises are activities like playing tennis or basketball, dancing, and playing hopscotch. Exercises like jumping jacks and running sprints are aerobic too.
- Skeletal muscles, like the ones that move your arms and legs, benefit from exercise too. Push-ups, pull-ups, and rowing a boat exercise your arm muscles and other muscles in your body, too. Running and bike riding are good leg exercises.
- Taking care of your muscles involves taking the proper precautions to prevent accidents, too. Starting with five to ten minutes of stretching will warm up your muscles and help prevent injury when you exercise.
- Muscles can be injured by overdoing it when you exercise. Sometimes a muscle is accidentally stretched too far; this is called a muscle strain. A pulled muscle or muscle strain may swell up and be rather painful. If you do get a muscle strain, stop exercising, and let an adult check it to see whether you need any medical attention. The prescription for a muscle strain is often "RICE": R for rest, I for ice, C for compression, and E for elevation. This means rest your strained ankle, put an ice pack on it for about 20 minutes at a time, wrap it with something like an Ace bandage, and prop it up above your heart level.
- Did you know that muscles could also be strained without exercising? Staying in one position for a long time, whether you are sitting at the computer or sitting in your school desk puts a lot of pressure on certain muscles too. That is why you need to sit properly. The right way is to sit up straight, with your back against the back of the chair, your bottom on the seat of the chair, and your feet on the floor. You should also get up and move every once in a while to give your muscles a break.



What about backpacks? Are backpacks bad for your muscles? Actually, a backpack is a good way to carry books, if it is used correctly, because with a backpack you use your strong back and abdominal muscles to carry the weight. The problem with backpacks is the amount of weight that you put into them. Don't pack more than what you can comfortably carry when you are standing up straight and walking. Also, it might seem like a good idea to put all of your books in there, (That way you won't forget any!) but don't do it. Pack just what you need, and put the heaviest books in the back of the backpack, nearest to your body. Take care of your muscles; you are going to want them to last for a long time!

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Name _____ Date _____

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1. Only athletes need to be concerned about the health of their muscles. <input type="radio"/> A False <input type="radio"/> B True	2. If you want to play on a sports team, you will need to stock up on sports drinks and energy bars. <input type="radio"/> A False <input type="radio"/> B True
3. The cardiac muscle is another name for the _____. <input type="radio"/> A Heart <input type="radio"/> B Lungs <input type="radio"/> C Stomach <input type="radio"/> D Brain	4. This article is mainly about _____. <input type="radio"/> A Aerobic exercises <input type="radio"/> B The heart <input type="radio"/> C Arm and leg muscles <input type="radio"/> D Keeping muscles strong and healthy
5. According to this article, backpacks can sometimes be a problem because _____. <input type="radio"/> A Backpacks are a bad way to carry books <input type="radio"/> B Some people put too much in their backpack <input type="radio"/> C Backpacks are too small <input type="radio"/> D They don't fit in a locker	6. The food pyramid probably shows which foods are good for your _____. <input type="radio"/> A Muscles <input type="radio"/> B Bones <input type="radio"/> C Brain <input type="radio"/> D All of the above
7. If you strain a muscle in your leg, you _____. <input type="radio"/> A May just need a little "RICE" <input type="radio"/> B Will definitely need to see a doctor <input type="radio"/> C Will be on crutches <input type="radio"/> D Should exercise some more right away	8. Aerobic exercises are any activities that get you moving and get your heart pumping. They are not just exercises like jumping jacks or sports. List ten or more aerobic activities that you might do in one day.